



## So you want to be a film extra?

This week we talk to Rob Martin, who has written a book called *You Can Be A Movie Extra*. He also has a company, The Casting Collective, which was formed in 1999. His company finds work for 'extras', people who want to appear in supporting roles in films or on television. He now employs 3,000 extras.

Rob says that people who have a more average appearance and don't stand out tend to get more work. He told us: 'People who are covered in tattoos or are really fat or really tall are only cast in more specific roles.'

Working as an extra won't lead to an Oscar nomination but Rob insists that it is an art form. 'The extras work very long hours and there's a lot of waiting around. And then they'll suddenly be required to dance like crazy for a nightclub scene, and more often than not they'll have to dance without any music, which I'm sure is very difficult!'

### So, what does it take to be an extra?

Rob says 'You have to have a good sense of humour and you have to be able to get on with people. As an extra it's your job not to annoy the stars, who always have a lot of pressure on them.'

One of Rob's extras, Nobuko Slater, has appeared as an extra in a number of big films, but he hasn't given up his day job. He said 'I have a full-time job in

finance in London, but in recent years I've seen myself in the films *Tomb Raider*, *Spy Game*, and *Legally Blonde*! It all began when I fancied doing something really different and I always liked the idea of meeting film stars. I applied for the role of 'Businessman wearing smart clothes' in *Tomb Raider* and they obviously liked my pictures because a month later I was on the film set. I only work as an extra for about ten days a year but that suits me very well. I'm already looking forward to seeing myself in the next Harry Potter film!

Another extra, Lucy Wallis, warns people who want to be extras that the job is often not very glamorous. 'I was once paid £100 to pretend to be dead for the day, for an episode of the TV programme *London's Burning*.'

Rob's book, which is packed with tips about the film and TV industry, stresses that extras have to be prepared for anything. He adds: 'Working as an extra doesn't pay very well, but it's unique and it's fun. And although they don't get much thanks for it, the extras are a major factor in a film's success – don't forget that!'

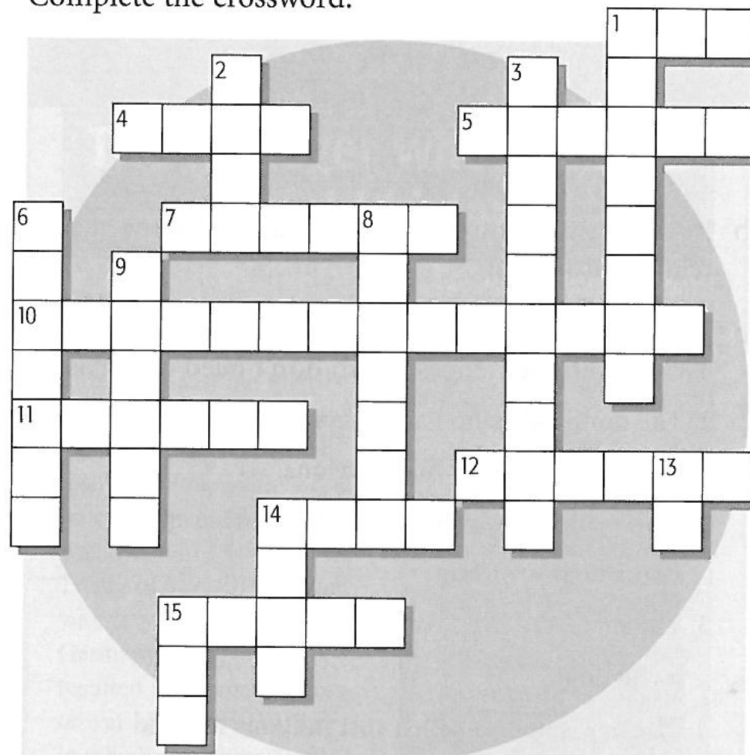
Tick (✓) the things which are true about extras and put a cross (X) next to those which aren't.

- 1 Extras can meet the stars of the films that they're in. ☒
- 2 You can earn a lot of money being an extra. ☐
- 3 People who look 'normal' get more work than those who look different. ☐
- 4 Extras need to be patient. ☐
- 5 Extras need to be good-looking. ☐
- 6 Being an extra is a full-time job. ☐
- 7 Being an extra can be hard work. ☐
- 8 Extras don't get the recognition they deserve. ☐

Match the highlighted words and phrases to the correct meaning.

- 1 the studio or place where a film is made film set
- 2 attractive and exciting \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 standing or sitting doing nothing \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 normal or typical \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 pieces of useful advice \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 wanted, liked the idea \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 make angry \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 is good or convenient for \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the crossword.



**Clues across →**

- 1 to record another language over the original language
- 4 the story; what happens in the film
- 5 e.g. a Dracula film
- 7 a film that continues the story from an earlier film
- 10 e.g. a film with space ships visiting other planets
- 11 a film that makes you laugh
- 12 a film with a lot of exciting sequences, e.g. with fast cars or a lot of people fighting
- 14 the actors in a film
- 15 a particular sequence in a film, usually shot in the same location

**Clues down ↓**

- 1 the person who gives instructions to the actors and technicians on a film
- 2 the part or character an actor plays
- 3 the voices, music, and other noises of a film
- 6 a film with a lot of songs
- 8 filmmakers often use computers to create special \_\_\_\_
- 9 another word for (the film was) 'shot'
- 13 *The Lord of the Rings* was based \_\_\_\_ a book by J. R. R. Tolkien
- 14 all the people who help to make a film
- 15 *Gone With the Wind* was \_\_\_\_ in the 19th century during the American Civil War

## KEY

1. *It has been done for you.*
2. *X*
3. *✓*
4. *✓*
5. *X*
6. *X*
7. *✓*
8. *✓*

1. *FILM SET*
2. *GLAMOROUS*
3. *WAITING AROUND*
4. *AVERAGE*
5. *TIPS*
6. *FANCIED*
7. *ANNOY*
8. *SUITS (ME) (VERY WELL)*

### Clues across

1. DUB
4. PLOT
5. HORROR
7. SEQUEL
10. SCIENCE FICTION
11. COMEDY
12. ACTION
14. CAST
15. SCENE

### Clues down

1. DIRECTOR
2. ROLE
3. SOUNDTRACK
6. MUSICAL
8. EFFECTS
9. FILMED
13. ON
14. CREW
15. SET